that the Director of Agriculture should make one more effort to improve agriculture through *samajams* presumably not composed of agriculturists since these men are, according to Mr. Velappan Nair, so far behind in education and culture. I shall commend your remarks, Mr. Velappan Nair, to the attention of the Director of Agriculture.

38. Fish curing in the coast villages.

MR. M. P. MUTHIA PILLAI (*Member, Nominated*) said that the Catholic Arasars were a sea-faring community and their hereditary profession was catching fish in the sea. They supplied one of the indispensable articles of food for over 95 per cent of the population of Travancore. Now it was well known that fish, as an article of food, was easily perishable and became positively injurious and dangerous to public health, if it was not properly cured. But the fishermen in South Travancore were using the most primitive methods of curing fish except perhaps in a few places, where after the inauguration of the Fisheries Department more scientific methods were employed.

With a view to supplying good fish to the public, Government were maintaining some fish-curing yards. They had till now opened only 10 yards, of which 7 were located in the Trivandrum Division with a coast line of over 75 miles from Cape Comorin to Edava. This worked out only at the rate of one yard for 11 miles, or one yard for 6 fishing villages. These villages were proverbially very poor and were devoid of any kind of communication whether by roads or by canals. The fisherfolk in these places had to carry fish in head-loads to distant markets. They had to do this every day. Left without any other means of livelihood and accustommed to a hand to mouth living, they sold away all the fish they caught; they seldom took the fish to the fish-curing yards or got them cured well.

If Government really wanted to see good fish supplied to the public, they should open more fish curing yards in the coast villages in the Southern Division. The opening of more yards was necessary as much in the interests of the fisher-folk themselves as of the general public who used fish as an article of food. Necessary rules should also be passed by Government in order to prohibit badly cured fish being sold as an article of food. It might even be made obligatory on the part of the fisherfolk to cure their fish in approved fish-curing yards.

But it was not the opening of more fish-curing yards that was alone necessary for effectively preventing the sale of bad fish. The material required for curing had also to be taken into account. Till about three years ago, salt for curing fish was being issued to fishermen at the rate of As. 14 per maund, as it was even now being done in British India. But three years ago, Government raised the price of salt all on a sudden to B. Re. 1-8-0 per maund, which was almost double the former rate. Unless the old rate of As. 14 was restored, it would not be worth while for the fishermen to make use of the fish-curing yards, which were sure to remain unused as at present. The statistics of the quantity of fish cured in some of the yards during the past few years would show how these yards were losing in popularity.

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It was perhaps necessary in this connection to assure Government that the revenues of the State would not suffer by a reduction in the price of salt. Whatever reduction that might immediately occur in the receipts from salt would be more than balanced by the increase in customs revenue on account of increase in the export of fish. At present owing to the variation in the price of salt between British India and Travancore, British Indian fish sold cheaper than Travancore fish. The export trade of Travancore in respect of fish was thus at a severe handicap.

Another grievance was in regard to the appointment of qualified Arasars in preference to members of other communities in the Fisheries Department. The Arasars were both by heredity and training better fitted than any other community for employment in the Fisheries Department. Pointed reference was in this connection made to the Brahmin Sub-Inspector in the Department, who was put in charge of a fish-curing yard. This Brahmin was really a fish out of water. Not only that, when the department insisted on every Sub-Inspector getting himself trained in fish-curing, this Brahmin Sub-Inspector alone was permitted to remain untrained. Nay more, when every Sub-Inspector was being transferred from place to place, this Brahmin Sub-Inspector alone was permitted to be in the same place, for over 8 years together for the obvious reason that his house was very near that place. In contrast to this, one could point out the treatment accorded to the only Catholic Arasar Sub-Inspector in the department. He was a qualified officer and was acting in the post for over eight years, but he had not yet been confirmed At the same time several of his juniors, who belonged to other communities, had been confirmed and had earned increments of pay. This was an index to the encouragement which the Catholic Arasars received in the Fisheries Department. Even in the posts of peons there was only a solitary member of the Catholic Arasar community. It should therefore be the policy of Government in future to prefer the candidates of the Arasar community to those of all other communities for appointments in the Fisheries Department.

Another matter which deserved serious attention at the hands of Government was the need for imparting scientific knowledge in fishing to the members of the Arasar community. Although the Fisheries Department had been in existence for over fifteen years, it had done little to give the fisherfolk a scientific training in their profession. The present fishery schools were little better than ordinary primary schools. What was needed most for the development of the fishing industry was the teaching of new methods of catching fish to the fishermen. The children of the Catholic Arasar community who had greater aptitude for fishing than any other community should be given such training.

DEWAN'S REPLY: Mr. Muthia Pillai, I have listened to what to me personally has been one of the most interesting and instructive representations I have ever heard in this Assembly. I did not realise

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that the lot of the sea-faring Arasars was such a hard one or that they needed more assistance than they are at present receiving at the hands of Government. What you said about the raising of the price of salt represents a very serious position indeed. The consequence is that fisherfolk are not able to cure very efficiently and properly and are thereby unable to compete on favourable or even terms with their brethren in British India. I enquired of the Director of Fisheries what the reason of this high rate of salt for fish-curing is. He told me that it used to be 14 annas a maund, then when the Government of India raised the duty of salt, we did the same in Travancore and the difference between 14 annas and the actual selling price of salt, and the general price of salt in Travancore was so great that the salt was raised to Re. 1-as. 8. Then came the lowering of the duty on salt in British India as well as in Travancore and although the general price of salt was lowered, apparently the fisherfolk and their fish-curing salt was forgotten and its price still remains at the high-water mark at which it was left when the price of salt receded. I will have the matter taken up immediately and see if we can do something to ameliorate the conditions as applying to fish-curing.

The other point you took up was the larger appointment of Arasars, that is, the fisher-folks themselves in the fish-curing yards. I also questioned the Director about that and there is no doubt at present that there is only one Arasar in the department. That is a question on which the Director and you and I are agreed. There is one man and only one and he is not a qualified fish curing expert. Therefore the Director has promised to take up the early consideration of the matter and submit his proposals to the Government, for the selection of qualified Arasars for special training in fish curing methods. A school will be opened shortly at Alleppey for the training of men in fish-curing—it may also be necessary to open such another training centre somewhere in South Travancore and when we get men trained it will be possible to get in the several fish-curing yards (and more yards may be opened) qualified and trained men of whom I trust several will be Arasars.

39. Assignment of a fixed percentage of the revenues of each taluk for public works in that taluk.

MR. K. VELAYUDHAN PANICKAN (*Member, Karunagapalli taluk, Group II*) said that Travancore had an annual revenue of over one crore and thirty lakhs of rupees. Of this more than fifty lakhs of rupees was realised from land revenue alone. It was stated in the annual administration reports that a certain proportion of the State revenues was expended on public works every year. But under the existing system Government were not able to secure the timely execution of all the public works necessary in the various taluks. Delay in the execution of sanctioned works also told upon the execution of other works which could not be taken up before those that were sanctioned were completed. It was highly necessary for these reasons to map out a new scheme which would ensure the execution of all the necessary

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